October 17, 2018

The International Day for the Eradication of persistent poverty

Together let’s build a world of respect for everyone’s human rights and dignity!

Testimonies from New Orleans, LA

What does it mean to build a world of respect for everyone’s human rights and dignity? Families living in extreme poverty in New Orleans tell us so much about what it looks like when they don’t feel respected as a human being because they are born extremely poor.

Ms. Pat said, “It looks like your poverty follows you all the way around for your entire life and it’s hard! It’s hard on everything: housing, food, transportation. It feels as if you are going nowhere. We can’t wait on the system to support our people; we do it ourselves with the little we have. Look! Linda was homeless with her three children. I cannot let her and her children be on the streets. I have to let her in until she finds a place. But after one month, it’s a lot for me to feed the entire family. I am poor myself! It’s hard to tell her to leave knowing that she does not have a place to go. But it’s like that with our people.”

Ms. Charlene dreams to own a house, said, “When I went to the housing agency they asked me, ‘What is your dream?’ I told them ‘My dream is to get my own house so that I don’t need to move from one place to another and that one day my children will not be on the streets.’ But I can never save any money to get to 50% of the cost. There is always something coming up! I have to get my children out of jail, or someone is sick and needs money. Sometimes I feel like I make one step forward and then go ten steps backwards.”

Chantelle added, “I work hard but don’t get a good pay, even with two jobs. They are run by the third parties, so I don’t have someone directly to talk to about employment opportunities. You are always on contract for six months and they keep cutting down your hours. They hire migrants because they don’t have to pay any charges. It would be great if they could at least give us $15 an hour. You cannot move one step forward with $8.50 per hour. You can only think about the future with your family, but can’t actually realize it.”

J.D. added, “Police arrest us for little things. Once you are in the system, you are trapped in it. You cannot get a house, and you cannot get a job. For your entire life you are trapped in! You are left behind because all the curses are on you. I am happy to learn that the City council voted to “ban the box” and provide decent living wages. That will change something in our lives.”

No one should be left behind! Today, we pay tribute to your courage, to your strength, to your perseverance, to your resistance to stand up every day and face the reality of your lives. You deserve respect and dignity as any other human being.